An Angel Complex

WALLACE IRWIN used to do amusing things, but he does them no more. He used to write sacrilegiously funny verses about a United States Senator's house on Fifth avenue that was a mixture of early Lincoln and late (oh, very late now) North German Lloyd. He used to play around with a Japanese schoolboy, whose comments on American life were acute as well as funny. One could wish for the Japanese schoolboy now—Hashimura was his name—to tell us what he thinks about Shantung and Kiao-Chau and points adjacent.

One could wish for anything, as a matter of fact, from Mr. Irwin, except *The Blooming Angel*. Long fiction is not his forte; it must be a suppressed desire that should have remained suppressed. (He has written some unusually good short stories.) *The Blooming Angel* is worse than *Venus in the East*. We cannot remember anything about *Venus in the East*, except that it was bad. We hope that by to-morrow we shall as completely have forgotten the Angel.

Only those amiable ones who are willing to see something funny even in false teeth and hay fever and pink elephants will be able to get much fun out of this book. And yet the impression is strong that the story is meant to be humorous. The heroine, we are also convinced, is supposed to be charming, a red Tam o' Shanter, slangy, saucy and impudent girl, who is expelled from college, in contrast to the blue stocking debating daughter of a professor, and who, if she does not continue the good work begun by the professor's daughter on "the winner of the William Barbour prize for oratory," at least succeeds in making him a millionaire, whose Framm's Complexion Preparations are sold all over the world.

This is how, in "the childish innocence of her voice, the Framm Complexion Girl talks: "I'm not going to let my candy husband play second trombone to anybody, not in all this awful big green world. I'm going to make a regular normulous hit out of my Goober. . . . I don't mean Shakespeare or any of those mighty uggles. But I can make Goober so great he'll just pop out of his clothes." There is more of this innocent talk in Mr. Irwin's story, if there are those who like and are willing to pay good money for it, with butter and eggs still up and the peace treaty not yet ratified.

THE BLOOMING ANGEL. By Wallace Irwin. George H. Doran Company.

Buoys for Boys

AS boys of the age for which Irving Hancock writes are not given to poring over book reviews it is safe to say anything we like about *Dave Darrin on Mediterranean Service* and *Uncle Sam's Boys Smash the Germans*. Let us confess that we knew nothing about Mr. Hancock and were inclined to feel scornful of his extremely bromidic looking books until we approached a nephew of seventeen. This youth, who was on the point of entering the Royal Air Force last November and is now about to enter college, advanced the facts that the Hancock books are fine, all of them—perfectly splendid stories of adventure; that every boy reads them, and that he would be glad to look over the two in question.

If it had not been necessary to reduce the books to book notices in a given time you might have had something really good in the way of reporting. At the end of the second day we unearthed the entranced youth from his easy chair and wrenched them from him. Since that time we have read the books, both of them, and discovered them to be 255 pages apiece of cleancut, double quick adventure. It has also been discovered that Mr. Hancock is the author of ten series of these gayly moving stories, and that the young male of the species trembles with joy at mention of his name.

Dave Darrin on Mediterranean Service is full of international intrigue. The U. S. battleship Hudson is on Mediterranean service with Dave Darrin and Dan Dalzell aboard as ensigns. There are some other officers, but they amount to practically nothing. On shore leave the ensigns discover a band of spies bent on no less ambitious an object than forcing England and America into war, and after many battles succeed in outwitting them. By way of relaxation the heroes then visit Gibraltar, Naples and Monte Carlo, with great benefit to the reader. "I shall not gamble at Monte Carlo," Dave remarks magnificently, "I can make better use of my money and my character. Any man who gambles bids good-by to the finer things of life."

Uncle Sam's Boys Smash the Germans in much the way that we have observed them do so in some six or seven boys' books this season. Not a single feature is overlooked. Six school chums see the war through side by side until they stand triumphant on the banks of the Rhine on page 254.

"Fellows, when we were all back in grammar and high school in the old home town of Gridley, did any of us ever have a notion we'd live to see this day on the Rhine?"

To which one of the fellows replies modestly enough:

"In those dear old days of the recent past we were concerned with the bigger job of learning how to grow up into really good, average Americans. So we finally arrived here on the Rhine, just as we'd go anywhere or do anything that America pointed out to us as being our job."

It sounds easy but it isn't. As the wife of one of our foremost juvenile authors said the other day: "John finds it so difficult to write these books. They all have to be different."

DAVE DARRIN ON MEDITERRANEAN SERVICE. By H. Irving Hancock. Philadelphia: Henry Altemus.

UNCLE SAM'S BOYS SMASH THE GERMANS. By H. Irving Hancock. Philadelphia: Henry Altemus.

When Telegrams Came in Longhand

OUT of a contest in telegraphic penmanship, initiated May, 1917, in the *Railroad Man's Magazine*, Donald McNicol, who was judge in the contest, has made a little book entitled *Telegraph Operators' Penmanship*, which describes the conditions under which the contest was held and the widespread interest in it all over the United States, Canada and in our island possessions.

The introduction tells how telegraphers in the pre-typewriter days developed a legible and flowing style of writing, and gives specimens of the penmanship of such famous quondam telegraphers as Thomas A. Edison, Samuel F. B. Morse, Andrew Carnegie and James D. Reid, the first superintendent in America of a commercial telegraph company.

The rest of the book is devoted to reproductions of the writing of the twenty-four winners in the *Railroad Man's Magazine* contest, or rather in the two contests, for the one for men was followed in 1918 by a second contest for women. It is worthy of note that when the specimen of writing sent in by Miss Laura Ecker of Kansas City, Mo., was handed to the judge his comment was: "The girl does not live who can write a hand as typically telegraphic and beautiful as that." But she did, and does, and she won first place in the contest.

TELEGRAPH OPERATORS' PENMANSHIP. New York: Donald McNichol, 253 Broadway.

"Throttled"

NOT all of the secret service work that resulted in the detection of German plots in the United States in the days previous to America's entry into the war was done by the Bureau of Criminal Investigation of the Department of Justice, by the United States Secret Service or even by the American Protective League. A considerable share of it fell to the so-called Bomb Squad of the New York police force, and in a lively and entertaining volume entitled *Throttled* Inspector Thomas J. Tunney tells of some of the adventures and achievements of this group of police detectives

While the story is Inspector Tunney's, he modestly admits on the title page that it was set down for him by Paul Merrick Hollister. The result may not be precisely literature—one could wish for more of the raciness and directness that one expects from a policeman talking shop—but it is a succinct, straightforward narrative from which the reader may not only get a new angle on the activities of German spies and plotters and of the officials detailed to throttle their activities, but much interesting information about cipher codes and how to decipher them, bombs and how to make them and similar useful bits of knowledge.

What makes the book worth while, however, is its revelations of the German character—nothing new, perhaps, but cumulative evidence of the curious and childlike complex of credulity, cruelty, conceit and cowardice which the world has come to know as the German spirit.

THROTTLED. By Thomas J. Tunney and Paul Merrick Hollister. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co.

For Merchant Mariners

HERMAN MELVILLE, Richard Henry Dana, Joseph Conrad, William McFee, have written of the days when "going to sea" was an adventure in which hardships predominated and the rewards of which, if one received any worth mentioning, were in the non-bankable or spiritual values of experience. Thanks to the United States Shipping Board and the revival of the American merchant marine under conditions adapted to the new spirit of things, going to sea to-day is no longer a hit or miss affair, but a regular trade which is taught as other trades are, that his its unions, its regulated hours of labor, its standardized rates of pay and regular routine of promotion for those who qualify. Being a sailor not long ago meant oftener than not that one was either a cringing slave or a soulless bully—if the writers of sea tales are to be believed. To-day it means that the young man who works at this trade of seamanship in any of its branches has a regular job which is a good deal better than any job he would be likely to hold on shore, both in the matter of wages, of personal comfort, of opportunity for saving, of experience and of chance for promotion.

Just what the opportunities are for young men in the American merchant marine to-day is told in simple, straightforward fashion by Nelson Collins in *Opportunities in Merchant Ships*. To be sure not every job on a ship is surrounded by ideal conditions, but young Americans are not asked to take these menial jobs, which are held by Europeans or Asiatics, according to Mr. Collins. Although dealing with facts, the author nevertheless has managed to invest his little volume with much of the romance of the sea, while at the same time giving the youngster who has the desire in his heart good advice as to how to get aboard ship and what he may expect to be called upon for and to get after he arrives there.

OPPORTUNITIES IN MERCHANT SHIPS. By Nelson Collins. Harper & Bros.

"The Twenticth Plane"

LIFE on the Twentieth Plane seems to be just one darned Chautauqua after another. That is the one clear impression that remains after reading the confusing jumble of "communications" received via Ouija board and other well beaten paths of interastral transportation and set down by Dr. Albert Durrant Watson of Toronto in a bulky volume called *The Twentieth Plane*. That isn't the highest plane—thank goodness! There are references by various late lamented individuals to the Twenty-fifth Plane, in which things are said to be similar though rather more so. There is, then, at least some slight ground for hope that at some stage in the life after death it will not be compulsory to sit under a pink sky in an astral Morris chair, absorbing synthetic beef extract and listening to disquisitions by Elbert Hubbard. That, one gathers, is the way in which many, if not all, of the dwellers in the Twentieth Plane spend their time.

It was a curiously mixed company that gathered in (or on) the Twentieth Plane to send communications to Dr. Watson through Louis Benjamin. Lincoln, Wordsworth, Shelley, Poe, Coleridge, Whitman, Taine, Hugo, Voltaire, George Eliot, Shakespeare—one could almost fill out the list from the backs of any five foot shelf of the World's Best Literature. This and the statement that the denizens of the Twentieth Plane spend their time in Mental Improvement help to create the Chautauqua atmosphere with which the whole "revelation" is surrounded. Robert G. Ingersoll is president of a college in the Twentieth Plane. In the faculty are Emerson, Carlyle and Lincoln. Did we not have the author's assurance that both he himself and Mr. Benjamin, the medium (called The Instrument in the book), are above suspicion, it would be natural to suspect some of those concerned with having delved deeply in the curricula of some of our worthiest correspondence universities.

The "communications" themselves are the same sort of elaborately platitudinous and obvious tommyrot one always gets from spirits. Why doesn't some one invent a Ouija board that will permit the spirits to say something original? The present crude contrivance seems designed to strain out every new or interesting thought. It would be a tremendous relief to pick up a book of spirit world communications and find something that hasn't already been said in this mundane plane by the good Dr. Marden, or Elizabeth Towne, or Mrs. Eddy. To be sure, the deadly Chautauqua atmosphere of the Twentieth Plane must sooner or later reduce the mental processes of the dwellers therein to a sort of platitudinous mush, and perhaps we are really getting the best they have to offer. They are all so self-satisfied one strongly suspects this is the case.

One wonders, too, why the only spirits we hear from are those of folk we already know all about. The merit of Patience Worth lay as much in the fact that nobody had ever heard of her as in the story she had to tell. Surely there must have been wise men before Bacon, poets before Chaucer, statesmen before Lincoln. The suggestion is freely offered to psychical researchers that they read up on the styles of Confucius, Zoroaster, Saadi, Caedmon and Ariosto, for example, and see if they can't get their Ouija boards to give up something fresh.

THE TWENTIETH PLANE. By Albert Durrant Watson, Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co.

The Come Back of a Down and Outer

DO you believe in fairness? If so you will have no trouble in assimilating the story of Marsh Gordon's "come back" as set down in *The Man Who Discovered Himself*, by Willis George Emerson, who, to judge from this novel, is a frank admirer of the Harold Bell Wright school of fiction.

At 50 Marsh Gordon is a cobbler in a shoe shop in Venice-by-the-Sea, California. He is afflicted with tuberculosis and a vain wife and daughter, the only bright spots in his life being his love of reading and his youngest daughter, Bessie. His illness causes him to lose his job, and his wife suggests that he go out into the desert country in an effort to find a cure. Marsh discovers that his wife and daughter are ashamed of him, and leaving them all the money he has saved except a few dollars he strikes out for Arizona.

And here is where the kind of faith that puts its trust in fairies comes in handy in the further perusal of this tale. From being agent at a lonely desert railway station, where he is known as Jim Marshall, Gordon in ten years passes through the stages of a wealthy ranch owner and a lawyer, and arrives at being Governor of Arizona. And when his wife and daughter come to visit him, not knowing who he is, it is only the loving child Bessie who recognizes him, the wife thinking his interest in her is that of a solitary man who wants to propose. And he sends her back to California to dwell in "society," a sphere only moved in by the wicked, according to harold bellwrighters.

After all Mrs. Gordon deserved better treatment at the hands of her creator, for she was a domestic genius of a very high order. Any woman who, on the salary of a shoe clerk in an Iowa town, could send her daughter through Wellesley and study art herself might better served as the leading character of the novel.

THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED HIMSELF. By Willis George Emerson. Chicago: Forbes & Co.